

the perfume of the pony-tailed girl who played alone with darts

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Vigo Beach

Paul: I didn't know where to turn. I felt
the melanoma in my soul. I felt
tormented by gnats of conscience.
My skin started to go soft.
I drove my car to Vigo Beach.

Gina: You said you loved me but I watched
your eyes as you said it and they looked
too anime to be believed. I grabbed
a gallon of vinegar and some nylon twine
and headed down to Vigo Beach.

Paul: I watched the waves rehearse
the saline agony of crashing.
I smelled the shell of a horseshoe
crab. I waited for you at the bistro
on the boardwalk in Vigo Beach.

Gina: Peter took the vinegar and twine to the
sculpture studio and me out to dinner.
I had the blackened grouper and he had
a fried egg. On the walls were sepia
photos of the eddies at Vigo Beach.

Peter: I love you, Gina. I love the sweetness
you exude. I love the salt in your soul.
Forgive me for rowing in the wrong
direction. Forgive me for picking the bark
off experience. Forgive me, forgive me.

Gina: I need a beach. I need the sea's release.
I need to ride the tide. I'm breaking up
with Paul who's moving back to Butte.
With the money from Mom's death,
we can buy a furtive condo looking out.

Betterness

I am my beloved's Advil and
she is my Tylenol. And when we
are tender, that's just codeine

She bombs me and I bomb her.
Still, our cathedrals are as pristine
as the day our egos had them built

Like a life preserver, the belief
that change will come sustains us;
that keeps us afloat in the sea of sameness

Penny Arcadia

I hear something:
the shriek
of the Laughing Lady
the crash
of a bucket of dimes
the waves
against the jetty at noon

I hear something:
the oily patter
of the shills
the sinister click
of the Zippo lighters

the Chesterfield voices
of the Pokerino widows

I hear something:
the drip of cherry syrup
onto a cone of crushed ice
the whir of rusted tackle
on a marlin boat
the screech of a teen
dizzy for foam dice

There's the boardwalk:
empty with cyclists at 8 AM
at noon
clogged with seagulls
at midnight
crowded with the ghosts
of sleeping old people

There's City Lunch:
where chatter
was on the menu
where white waitresses
wore white hair
where ice
was delivered by tongs

I smell something: the greed
of the hard sell
the mildewed freezer
in the pool hall
the vinegar stink
of peanut-oil fries
the cigar ash in the sea

I smell something: the foaming
German shepherds
locked in cages
under the pier
the perfume
of the pony-tailed girl
who played alone with darts

I remember something:
the blackmailers
who ran the miniature

golf courses
the arcade owners
selling crucifixes
for thirty coupons

Body & Soul

Body: Every day, I loosen the screws.
At night, I wear nuclear shoes.

Soul: Every day, I tighten the screws.
At night, I walk on nuclear shoes.

Body: Every day, I visit the stews.
At night, I wear nuclear shoes.

Soul: Every day, I steer clear of the stews.
At night, I walk on nuclear shoes.

Body: Every day, I ignite the fuse.
At night, I wear nuclear shoes.

Soul: Every day, I snuff out the fuse.
At night, I walk on nuclear shoes.

Body: Every day, I uncover the clues.
At night, I wear nuclear shoes.

Soul: Every day, I ignore the clues.
At night, I walk on nuclear shoes.

Body: Every day, I kiss Death's muse.
At night, I wear nuclear shoes.

Soul: Every day, I snub Death's muse.
At night, I walk on nuclear shoes.

God's Vial

The poor sup from the Tanzanite vial of God
and are reconfigured for accomplishment.

The disaffected sip from the Amorite vial of God
and are redecorated with badges of false corduroy.

The disoriented stare at the Bakelite vial of God
and rewitness the bloody crucifixion of money.

The holy tear at God's Levirate vial
and are redispersed to contiguous evisceration.

The porous bear the anchorite's vial
atop columns of luminous insolvency.

The fractured fashion an anthracite vial
in violation of inviolate autonomy.

God reconnoiters the limits of Hell
amid cries of insuperable ecstasy.

The Solace of Olives

When I lived in Valdosta,
I relied on
the solace of olives

When I moved to Brainerd,
I depended on
the solace of olives

Transferred to Taos,
I turned to
the solace of olives

Alone in Eugene,
I sought out
the solace of olives

Retired in Anaheim,
I entertain
the solace of olives

It's Like

It's like sewing a rip in your jeans with garter snakes instead of thread.

It's like watching a Russian film with the ghost of Ronald Reagan.

It's like squeezing three-bean salad out of a toothpaste tube.

It's like driving from Detroit to Denver in a cardboard car.

It's like swimming in Maalox.

It's like eating drywall.

It's like, it's like...

It's like drawing with Cesium.

It's like interviewing a neutrino.

It's like French-kissing a shaman.

It's like reading *Moll Flanders* in Urdu.

It's like fact-checking Joseph of Arametheia.

It's like changing the colostomy bag on a Berkshire pig.

It's like digging a tunnel to Trenton with your mother's tongue.

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